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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 001065

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2019  
PREL, BM, PGOV, PHUM, PREL, RP  
SUBJECT: PHILIPPINES URGES IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF AUNG SAN  
SUU KYI

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Larry Memmott, Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In the aftermath of his May 16 phone conversation with Secretary Clinton, Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Secretary Alberto Romulo issued a blunt statement on Sunday, May 17, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi and urging Burma to release democracy activists and hold free elections. Although senior DFA officials assured the Embassy that they will continue to press Burma for action regarding what they characterized as "trumped-up charges" against ASSK and her continued imprisonment, they suggested ASEAN's consensus-based decisionmaking and tradition of noninterference in each other's internal affairs may inhibit rapid progress on an ASEAN-wide response. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs issued an unusually strong policy statement May 17 condemning the Burmese military junta's imprisonment of democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi, calling for her immediate release and saying it was "high time" for the junta to release all political opposition activists and allow free and unfettered elections. The rare Sunday policy statement came just one day after Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo received a phone call from Secretary Clinton to discuss the Burmese military junta's arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi.

¶3. (C) Senior DFA officials informed Post that the Philippines would continue to follow up and press hard for an ASEAN statement on Suu Kyi's status, but it remained unclear what form this might take. Given ASEAN's consensus-based decisionmaking process, Burma would refuse to endorse -- and thereby block -- any ASEAN-wide statement. A chairman's statement by ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan may be the best possible outcome at this time.

¶4. (SBU) Begin text of Philippine statement:

Statement of Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo on the Detention of Aung San Suu Kyi at Insein Prison 17 May 2009

The Philippine Government is deeply troubled and outraged over the filing of trumped up charges against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her transfer to Insein prison, particularly when concerns have been raised regarding her health condition.

These recent incidents will surely impede the process of national reconciliation and the Roadmap to Democracy in Myanmar.

We urge the government of Myanmar to resolve the matter speedily, and to release Aung San Suu Kyi immediately and unconditionally.

The Myanmar Government need not be sidetracked by the recent trumped up charges. As we have conveyed earlier, it is high time for the Myanmar Government to carry out its own

&Roadmap for Democracy8: its avowed program of releasing political detainees, including unfettering the National League for Democracy, and allowing its unconditional participation in free elections.

Fulfilling these commitments is long overdue.

End text.

15. (C) COMMENT: The Foreign Secretary's statement was unusually robust, even given that the Philippines has been ASEAN's most proactive voice for moves toward democratization in Burma and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. But foreign affairs officials recognize they face a difficult task in budging ASEAN from its consensus-based approach on Burma.  
Memmmott